

Remarks

Status of the Specification

In the specification, the Abstract has been amended to delete lines 11-15 as suggested by Examiner Elisca. Accordingly, Applicant requests removal of the objection to the specification.

Status of the Claims

Prior to this Amendment, claims 1-38 are pending in the application. Claims 1-38 stand rejected according to the Office action dated September 8, 2003. By this Amendment, Applicant is amending claims 1 and 4-10; canceling claims 2, 3, and 11-38 without prejudice; and adding claims 39-47. Examination and consideration of claims 1, 4-10, and 39-47 in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein are respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 2, 7-13, 15-18, and 20-38

Claims 1, 2, 7-13, 15-18, and 20-38 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,946,660 (“McCarty et al.”) and U.S. Patent No. 6,347,302 (“Joao”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,724,261 (“Denny et al.”).

Claims 2, 11-13, 15-18, and 20-39 are canceled without prejudice, thereby rendering the rejection moot for these claims.

Amended independent claim 1 specifies:

1. A method for renting to a customer a self-storage unit located at a self-storage facility, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a customer service area including a customer service counter, the customer service counter having a first predetermined area which is viewed by at least one camera positioned in the customer service area, the customer service counter being configured to minimize glare in images captured by the at least one camera;

establishing voice communication between a remote manager and a customer entering the customer service area using a communication link so that the customer and the remote manager can orally communicate using the communication link;

the customer orally communicating to the remote manager an indication of the storage needs of the customer;

the remote manager orally communicating to the customer a recommended self-storage unit;

the remote manager facilitating inspection of the recommended self-storage unit by the customer, the step of the remote manager facilitating inspection of the recommended self-storage unit including the step of providing the customer access to the recommended self-storage unit so the customer can inspect the recommended self-storage unit;

providing the customer a hardcopy rental agreement form;

the remote manager directing the customer to fill out portions of the hardcopy rental agreement form;

the customer inserting certain data on the hardcopy rental agreement form as directed by the remote manager;

the customer placing the hardcopy rental agreement form on the first predetermined area; and

the remote manager verifying at least some of the inserted data using the output of the at least one camera, at least one image captured by the at least one camera allowing the remote manager to view an image of the hardcopy rental agreement placed on the first predetermined area by the customer.

McCarty et al., Joao, and Denny et al., alone or in combination, do not teach the subject matter of independent claim 1 as currently amended. Further, in response to Examiner Elisca's statement during the Interview on November 25, 2003 regarding apartment rental systems, Applicant is not aware of an apartment rental system where a customer orally communicates with a remote manager while the customer is positioned in a customer service area such that the customer can complete, with the assistance of the remote manager, a rental agreement form for an apartment. Accordingly, independent claim 1 is allowable.

Claims 4-10 depend from claim 1, and consequently include patentable subject matter for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. Additionally, claims 4-10 specify additional limitations that, in combination with claim 1, are believed to be inventive.

Applicant has amended claims 4-10 to better clarify the invention. Claims 8 and 9 have also been amended to depend from claims 1 and 8, respectively.

Claims 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, and 19

Claims 3-6, 14, and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over McCarty et al., Joao, and Denny et al., and further in view of Official Notice.

Claims 3, 14, and 19 are canceled without prejudice, thereby rendering the rejection moot for these claims.

As discussed above, claims 4-6 depend from claim 1 and are allowable over the combination of McCarty et al. Joao, and Denny et al. for the same reasons as claim 1. Official Notice of automatic telephone dialing systems does not cure the deficiencies of the combination of McCarty et al. Joao, and Denny et al. Applicant also disagrees that it would be obvious, in view of the existence of automatic telephone dialing systems, to adapt the same for use in a rental system according to the invention. Accordingly, claims 4-6 are allowable.

New Claims

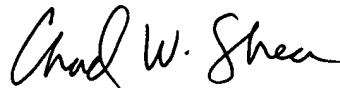
Applicant adds new claims 39-47 by this amendment. Claims 39-47 depend from claim 1, and consequently include patentable subject matter for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. Additionally, claims 39-47 specify additional limitations that, in combination with claim 1, are believed to be inventive. Accordingly, Applicants request allowance of claims 39-47.

Conclusions

In view of the above amendments and remarks it is submitted that the claims are patentably distinct over the cited references and that the application is in condition for allowance. Entry of the amendments and allowance of the claims are therefore respectfully requested.

If any issues remain outstanding following entry of the above amendments, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned Applicant's Representative at (262) 956-6525 to discuss the claims further.

Respectfully submitted,



Chad W. Shea
Reg. No. 48,470

Docket No.: 088516-9001
Michael Best & Friedrich LLP
100 East Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202-4108

(414) 271-6560

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